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RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0340
RUEHDBU/AMEMBASSY DUSHANBE 0892
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 4607
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 2898
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 0910
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 1557
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1512
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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KWMN](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UZ](#)

SUBJECT: UZBEKISTAN: LEADING ACTIVIST CRITICIZED BY EXILES
FOR FAVORING ENGAGEMENT

REF: A. TASHKENT 767

[1](#)B. TASHKENT 1138

Classified By: POLOFF R. FITZMAURICE FOR REASONS 1.4 (B, D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: On October 10, poloff met at the Embassy with human rights activist Mutabar Tojiboyeva, who told poloff that she favored engagement with the Uzbek government and was personally against sanctions, which she believed would cutoff dialogue with the government. However, she reported being pressured by Uzbek exiles in Europe and the United States to take a harder line against the Uzbek government and to join the Birlik opposition party. Tojiboyeva's statements confirm what we have long suspected: Uzbek exiles in Europe and the United States are pressuring local activists in Uzbekistan to take a harder line against the government, even if doing so would potentially put those local activists in greater danger. End summary.

ACTIVIST REPORTS FEELING PRESSURED BY UZBEK EXILES

[1](#)2. (C) Tojiboyeva complained to poloff about being pressured by Uzbek exiles in Europe and the United States to take a harder line against the Uzbek government and to join an opposition party. She told poloff that she was personally against sanctions, believing it would cutoff dialogue between the West, local human rights activists, and the Uzbek government, which she believed offered the best chance of promoting human rights reform in the country. She reported being heavily criticized for her views by exiled activists and journalists, who have accused her of acting "like a celebrity" since her release from prison. Tojiboyeva added that she was afraid to voice her views while in Europe (see para 7), believing that she would be attacked again by the exiles.

[1](#)3. (C) Tojiboyeva noted that the exiles in Europe and the United States were far removed from the realities on the ground in Uzbekistan. She believed many of them supported sanctions and a harder line against the Uzbek government

because they believed it would weaken the Karimov regime. In contrast, Tojiboyeva noted that her goal was to promote human rights reform in Uzbekistan with the government as a partner. She also noted that activists still in Uzbekistan would likely face greater harassment if the West enacted further sanctions against Uzbekistan.

¶4. (C) Since her release from prison, Tojiboyeva has not shied away from criticism of the government in interviews with independent journalists, particularly over prison conditions (ref A).

BIRLIK LEADER DEMANDS TOJIBOYEVA JOIN OPPOSITION PARTY

¶5. (C) Tojiboyeva appeared especially annoyed by demands from Birlik opposition party leader Abdurakhmon Pulatov, who is based in Washington, that she join Birlik. Tojiboyeva said that Pulatov started calling her shortly after her release from prison. In their conversations, she reported that Pulatov frequently demeaned the work of human rights activists in Uzbekistan, describing them as people "who set fires," while claiming that opposition party members were those "who put out fires." Tojiboyeva reported that she was afraid of being used "as a prop" by Birlik if she joined the party. She also believed that becoming an opposition activist would make it impossible for her to engage in any type of dialogue with authorities. In contrast, she said her goal now was to try to convince local authorities in Margilan to re-register her former human rights group, the Fiery Hearts Club (Note: The club was disbanded after her arrest.

End note.)

¶6. (C) Other Uzbek human rights activist who recently participated in an International Visitors program in the United States also complained about being contacted and pressured by Pulatov. They reported that Pulatov attempted to have them sign off on a press statement declaring that the main goal of Uzbek human rights activists was to register the Birlik party, which they refused to do.

TOJIBOYEVA RECEIVES VISA, PREPARES FOR EUROPEAN TOUR

¶7. (C) Tojiboyeva was released from prison on medical grounds in June and was recently granted an exit visa by Uzbek authorities to seek medical treatment abroad (ref B). She reported receiving a Schengen visa from the French Embassy on October 9, which will allow her to travel to Germany in mid-October, where she will be medically examined at a private clinic near Frankfurt. She will be accompanied by another activist, Marina Pikolina. According to Tojiboyeva, the French government will fund their transportation to Europe, while the German government will pay for her medical examination. After her medical evaluation, Tojiboyeva plans to travel to Ireland for a month for any necessary follow-up medical treatment, which will be paid for by the Front Line international human rights organization. In November, she then plans to go to Switzerland to receive the 2008 Martin Ennals Award for Human Rights Defenders, for which she was selected in May by a committee representing ten of the world's leading human rights organizations, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Front Line. She also planned to participate in an international 1,000 Women of Peace conference while in Switzerland.

¶8. (C) Tojiboyeva thanked the Embassy again for advocating on her behalf, which along with efforts by EU Embassies, she credited with her release and the government's decision to grant her an exit visa.

¶9. (C) Tojiboyeva's health condition appeared to be stable. She noted that her stomach continued to bother her, which she partly attributed to stress. Authorities had previously granted Tojiboyeva permission to travel from Margilan to Tashkent to undergo medical tests, which were unable to diagnosis her illness.

COMMENT

¶10. (C) Tojiboyeva continues to stand tall as one of the most principled and determined human rights activists in Uzbekistan. Her statements confirm what we have long suspected: Uzbek exiles in Europe and the United States are pressuring activists in Uzbekistan to take a harder line against government, even if doing so would potentially put local activists in greater danger. As Tojiboyeva herself noted, many of the exiles are far removed from the realities on the ground in Uzbekistan - and unlike activists still in Uzbekistan - they have little to lose from a break in dialogue between the government and the West. Many of the exiles, especially those associated with opposition parties, appear less interested in promoting human rights in Uzbekistan than in promoting their own interests and weakening the Karimov regime. We do not want to confuse our own human rights agenda in Uzbekistan with the agenda of these Uzbek exiles.

NORLAND